

Fall Prevention

Issue Brief

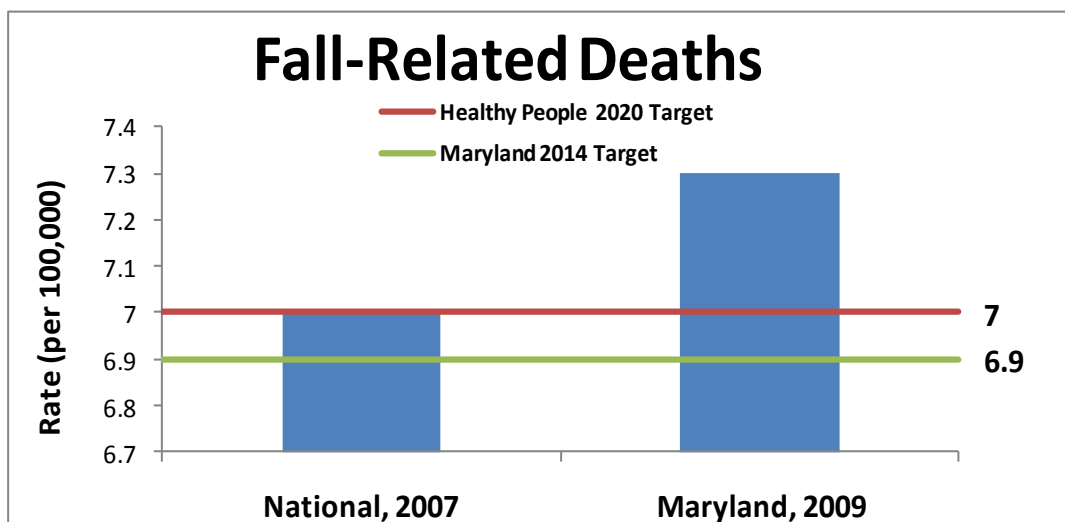
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HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

Falls are a common and major cause of injury, disability and death in older adults. Falls can result in moderate to severe injury ranging from head trauma to bone fractures. These injuries often lead to hospitalization and nursing home admission.

Among Older Adults (65 or older)...

- 50% have trouble getting up without help after they have fallen ⁽¹⁾
- Falls cause 90% of broken hips ⁽¹⁾
- 30% experience a fall each year ⁽²⁾
- Falls are the leading cause of injury death ⁽²⁾
- In 2008, over 19,700 of US adults died from fall-related injuries ⁽²⁾



Source: National Vital Statistics System, 2007; Maryland Vital Statistics Administration, 2009

WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone

Individuals of all ages are at risk of being injured by a fall.

Older Adults

The risk for falls increases as we age. This increased risk is likely due to the various changes that accompany aging.

Individuals with Other Medical Conditions

Other medical conditions including arthritis and post surgery complications contribute to the increased risk of falls.

Number of Health Problems	Chance of Falling
0	10%
1	20%
2	30%
3	60%
4	80%

75% of all falls occur in the home (American Geriatrics Society)

DECREASE YOUR RISK

Tips to help ensure safety in your home

Lighting — Make sure that lighting is bright in your home. Use nightlights in your bedroom, bathroom, and hallways to prevent injuries.

Rugs — Ensure that rugs are fastened to the ground. Loose ends should be tacked down.

Electrical Cords — Move electrical cords so that they are not lying on the floor and obstructing walkways.

Bathroom — Install handrails in your bathroom near the bathtub, shower, and toilet.

Stairs — Always use the handrails in the stairwell for support. Be sure that your stairwells are well lit.

Kitchen — Store items within reach. Avoid using stools or stepladders.

Footwear—Wear shoes with firm non-skid, non-friction soles. Avoid wearing loose-fitting shoes.

EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

Remembering When

This fire and fall prevention program was developed to help older adults live safely at home for as long as possible.

Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance

Studies have found that Tai Chi can substantially decrease the risk of falls in older adults. The program is designed to be offered 2-3 times per week in community settings.

Stepping On

A seven week falls prevention class incorporating behavior change theory.

A Matter of Balance

Emphasizes practical strategies to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels.

LOCAL ACTION

In order to provide county level prevention programs aimed at adults aged 65 and older the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has provided a mini-grant program. The program is known as Safe Steps for Seniors: A Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults. In FY 2012, Baltimore City, Allegany County, Caroline County, Kent County, and Washington County are implementing local fall prevention programs.

With funding provided by the CDC's Core Violence and Injury Prevention Program, DHMH has awarded grants to Cecil County, Washington County, and MAC Inc. Area Agency on Aging. This funding will be used to support fall prevention in older adults including "Stepping On" and "Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance."



Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Center for Health/Injury Prevention Program

FALL PREVENTION RESOURCES

CDC, Injury Prevention and Control <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>

Prevent Falls <http://www.fallprevention.org/>

Fall Prevention Center of Excellence <http://www.stopfalls.org>

DHMH, Family Health Administration, Fall Prevention http://fha.maryland.gov/ohpetup/eip_falls.cfm

The American Geriatrics Society Foundation for Health in Aging http://www.healthinaging.org/public_education/falls_index.php

Falls Prevention for Older Adults Resource List <http://fha.maryland.gov/pdf/ohpetup/FallsResourceList.pdf>

Maryland Access Point <http://www.marylandaccesspoint.info/>

CITATIONS

(1) Fall Prevention.org <http://www.fallprevention.org/pages/fallfacts.htm>

(2) CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>